

Remarks/Arguments:

Claims 1-30 are pending. Claims 2, 17-21, 25 and 29 stand rejected and claims 1, 3-16, 22-24, 26-28 and 30 are withdrawn from consideration. In this response dependant claims 17 and 21 are amended. Accordingly claims 2, 17-21, 25 and 29 are presented for reconsideration.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 102

The Office Action sets forth at page 2, "Claims 2 and 25 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being clearly anticipated by Leo et al." Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for the reasons set forth below.

Applicant's invention, as recited in claim 2, includes features not disclosed or suggested by Leo, namely:

... a rim having a plurality of holes ...

... a respective plurality of nipples ...

... an axial bidirectional locking means formed on a portion of each of said respective plurality of nipples ...

... an equal plurality of spokes secured to said rim by means of said respective plurality of nipples ...

... each nipple is disposed in the respective hole in the rim and retained in said hole by a respective one of said axial bidirectional locking means so as to be substantially gastight in the rim.
(Emphasis Added)

These features are described in applicant's specification, for example, at page 3, lines 22-25 and page 5, lines 1-8.

Applicant's invention is a spoked wheel for cycle use useable with tubeless tires. A feature is a plurality of nipples each fitted to be substantially gastight into respective holes in the rim. Each of the plurality of nipples is retained in their respective hole by axial bidirectional locking means. The axial bidirectional locking means being formed on a portion of each of the respective plurality of nipples.

Leo et al. is relied upon as "[disclosing] a wheel comprising a plurality of spokes connected to a single channel rim. Each spoke 4 includes a nipple 20 inserted through an opening 41' in the rim in a gas tight fit, with the nipple having internal threads 29 in a blind

hole 28 to threadedly receive the threaded end 12 of the spoke in a manner that would create an axial bidirectional locking means." Applicant respectfully disagrees with this overly broad interpretation of Leo.

Applicant initially notes that the Office defines some elements in Leo by reference numbers but fails to provide any reference numbers or other specific disclosure for the "bidirectional locking means" purportedly present in Leo. Applicant also notes that the seal according to Leo secures the nipple to the spoke, allowing for relative movement between the nipple and the rim when the rim is resiliently deformed during use by the effect of impact of the wheel against the road, while impeding any movement between the spoke and the nipple. Applicant respectfully directs the Examiner's attention to paragraph [0048] of Leo in which it is disclosed "when a spoke 4 loosens, the head 25 of the nipple no longer presses the seal...thus there is no longer a good seal between the nipple and the cup, with the result that a certain amount of air escapes from the chamber 10, causing the pressure in the tire to decrease."

That is, according to Leo, the connection between the spoke and the rim is not gas tight, i.e., it is not able to prevent pressure losses in case of reciprocal movement between the rim and the spoke. On the contrary, the pressure losses due to the loose connection are necessarily used as an indicator that the spoke needs to be tensioned.

Applicant further notes that the seal disclosed in Leo cannot properly be considered as a "bidirectional locking means." First of all, the configurations of the seal allow the nipple to slide in relation to the rim at least in one direction, i.e., in the direction from the hub to the rim, when it is inserted in the rim. Secondly, because the nipple can be inserted into the corresponding hole in the rim, it can also be withdrawn the same way.

Stated in another way, in the present invention the nipple is bi-directionally locked to the rim and the coupling between the nipple and the rim is gastight. On the contrary, according to the art of record the nipple is locked to the spoke thread. It is clear that if the spoke is loosened or (worse) broken, the nipple no longer presses the seal against the rim and air flows outside (see paragraph [0048] of Leo). The action derived from the interface of the gasket to the rim in Leo is insufficient to provide bi-directional locking of the nipple to the rim or a gastight seal.

Because Leo fails to disclose each and every feature of applicant's claimed invention, applicant respectfully submits that the rejection of claim 2 as being anticipated by Leo should be withdrawn and the claim allowed.

Claim 25 depends on claim 2 and, thus, is likewise not subject to rejection for at least the reasons set forth above with respect to claim 2.

Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. § 103

The Office Action sets forth at page 3, "Claims 17-21 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Leo et al in view of Vetterlein." Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for the reasons set forth below.

As set forth above, Leo fails to disclose every feature of applicant's claim 2. The Office readily admits that Leo fails to include the features of dependent claim 17-21 and relies upon Vetterlein to make up for these deficiencies. Applicant respectfully submits, however, that Vetterlein fails to make up for the deficiencies of Leo et al. mentioned above with respect to claim 2.

For instance, with respect to claim 17, the Office states that the nipple of Vetterlein has two different threaded arrangements. Neither of these arrangements disclose or suggest, however, a thread on the shank of the nipple which engages with a female thread disposed in the rim to hold the nipple on the rim with the shoulder abutting against the rim.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that claim 17 is allowable over the cited prior art. Claims 18-20 are likewise allowable at least in view of their dependency upon allowable claim 17 or claim 2.

Regarding claim 21, Vetterlein fails to disclose or suggest that the nut is screwed onto the shank of the nipple and grips the rim between the nut and the shoulder. It is clear from the disclosure and Fig. 4 of Vetterlein that union 8 acts as a spacer to prevent nut 8 from coming into contact with the rim. Additionally, Vetterlein fails to disclose or suggest that the axial bidirectional locking means comprises a shoulder at one end of the shank of the nipple and a thread on the shank of the nipple which engages the rim to hold the nipple on the rim with said shoulder abutting against said rim.

Accordingly, applicant respectfully submits that claim 21 is allowable over the cited prior art.

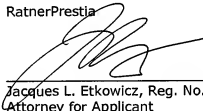
The Office Action sets forth at page 4, "Claim 29 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Leo et al in view of Chiang et al." Applicant respectfully traverses this rejection for the reasons set forth below.

Chiang is relied upon for "[teaching] a spoke 60 that is made of steel, and a spoke 60' that is made of aluminum alloy." Chiang does not make up, however, for the deficiencies of Leo et al. discussed above with respect to claim 2. Accordingly, applicant submits that claim 29 is allowable at least in view of its dependency upon allowable claim 2. Applicant respectfully requests, therefore, that the rejection of claim 29 be withdrawn and the claim allowed.

In view of the amendments and remarks set forth above, applicant submits that the above-identified application is in condition for allowance which action is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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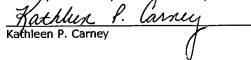
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I hereby certify that this correspondence is being electronically transmitted to: Commissioner for Patents, Alexandria, VA on March 11, 2009.


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